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## Command, union partner for better AFMC

*An Editorial by Gen. Lester Lyles, AFMC Commander  
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**General Lyles**

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio — Partnerships have been a mainstay of American society since the birth of our nation. Our founding fathers formed one of the greatest partnerships of all time when they came together to forge the Declaration of Independence and later, the Constitution.

Partnerships are also vital to our military history. The Allies of World War II and the more recent Persian Gulf War pooled resources to further a common goal. And today, our national defense strategy is based on a military doctrine that calls for all the Armed Services to work together as partners for the strongest defense possible.

Air Force Materiel Command and the American Federation of Government Employees Council 214, AFL-CIO, which is the union representing the vast majority of AFMC's civilian employees, share that objective, too. We have formed a partnership that is enabling the people of our command to better carry out our mission.

The partnership is based on a simple, but important vision – labor and management working together, creating and sustaining an environment to take care of our people so they can take care of the mission.

There was a time when our union and management debated how best to serve the command workforce. But today, our relationship is built on such principles as respect for all workers, common interests and shared problems, an open sharing of information, trust in each other as equals and a commitment to sustaining a partnership process. We adhere to these principles with respect and appreciation for each other's roles and responsibilities.

Our partnership process kicked off some 18 months ago with the formation of a command-level Partnership Council and local councils at most AFMC bases. These councils are made up of representatives from the command and AFGE.

They are working together on a number of initiatives with an ultimate goal of operationalizing the partnership concept across the command, from the headquarters to the smallest AFMC unit. We want to instill management-union partnerships as part of our day-to-day routine – a routine with a people-first philosophy.

Key elements to operationalizing this partnership include establishing partnership agreements at all AFMC centers and operating locations, redefining the roles of AFMC and the union by giving the union a greater role as an advisor to commanders, requiring partnership training for all AFMC people, developing measurements to track the partnership efforts, implementing a communication plan that will help all members of the workforce to be better informed and last, but perhaps most important, undertaking meaningful initiatives.

Some of the initiatives already being worked by our Partnership Council include:

— Developing a plan to establish Alternative Dispute Resolution processes at each base. ADR allows our people a way to resolve workplace disputes without filing a formal grievance or unfair labor complaint. It allows our people to meet, discuss and reach agreements. It has been a big success at the bases where it's already in place.

— Working to come to an agreement on 105 Air Force Instructions which previously were converted from Air Force regulations. The command and AFGE have reached agreement on 63 of the AFIs and are making progress on the majority of the remaining instructions.

— Moving closer to reaching an agreement on whether the command should implement the new "pass-fail" civilian appraisal program.

— Working with the AFMC Surgeon General's office to develop a command-wide policy for workers compensation and return-to-work issues.

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As the Air Force command with the largest number of civilian employees, we are committed to maintaining a climate in which management and union work together. Whether it be on a shop floor, at one of our depots or around the table in a conference room, we must work together as partners.

Our Partnership Councils, both at the HQ AFMC/AFGE Council 214 level and at our centers, are making great strides as we establish partnerships as the standard for how we operate. We call on everyone in AFMC, military and civilian, to work as a team and embrace the efforts of their local Partnership Councils.

It will make a difference in your quality of life on the job and become an important part of AFMC's own history of success in meeting our nation's national security objectives. @